

1.2 Produce formal writing

Key tips

- Use examples of formal writing to model your work on.
- Understand the focus of the task and who you are writing for by underlining the keywords.
- Plan your time wisely – don't spend all your time deciding on a topic. See [Choosing a question](#)
- Write about something you are familiar with and have an opinion about.
- Plan your writing carefully so it has a clear introduction, middle, and conclusion.
- Indicate a new paragraph by leaving a blank line or indenting the first line of the new paragraph.
- Have a series of 4–5 paragraphs discussing the main point. Use a clear structure for each paragraph of your essay.
- Include and incorporate reliable statistics, facts, examples, and opinions.
- Use formal language and tone throughout.
- Use a wide range of vocabulary and language features accurately and appropriately.
- Use rhetorical questions and/or minor sentences as a special feature rather than in every paragraph.
- Read your writing 'aloud in your head' at least once. Listen for any weak or inappropriate words, informal language, run-on sentences, or punctuation errors.
- You will not be allowed to use a dictionary in the examination so use words you know how to spell.
- Check that you have used the correct spelling of a word that may sound like another (there/their/they're, here/hear/hare).
- Check each new sentence starts with a capital letter.
- Read from a range media such as newspapers, magazines, television, and radio to keep up to date with current issues and opinions to help your writing.

Achievement

- [Express idea\(s\) with supporting detail](#) in a piece of formal writing.
- Use a [writing style appropriate](#) to audience, purpose, and text type.
- [Structure material](#) in a way that is appropriate to audience, purpose, and text type.
- Use [writing conventions without intrusive errors](#).

Make sure you:

- understand why you are writing and who you are writing for by underlining keywords in both the instructions and the task
- brainstorm ideas
- have at least one central idea to be discussed in 4–5 clear paragraphs
- add information by using some examples and facts to support your idea(s)

- use formal language, see [Standard English](#)
- write in sentences and paragraphs
- order paragraphs in a logical sequence with an introduction, 4–5 paragraphs developing the central idea in the middle, and conclusion
- use topic sentence, explanation, and example paragraph structure
- proofread carefully and correct punctuation, spelling, and grammar errors
- write over 300 words.

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Achievement with Merit

- [Develop idea\(s\) with detail](#) in a piece of formal writing.
- Use a [controlled writing style](#) appropriate to audience, purpose, and text type.
- [Structure material clearly](#) in a way that is appropriate to audience, purpose, and text type.
- Use [writing conventions without intrusive errors](#).

Make sure you:

- reach Achievement
- spend time brainstorming clear reasons to support central ideas and/or opinions when planning
- organise ideas for a specific reason such as planning or linking ideas between paragraphs
- support all points with well chosen examples, facts, and opinions
- use formal language and an objective tone (control your feelings) throughout the essay
- try to interest the audience by using some familiar ideas or language
- connect paragraphs by linking ideas and details for a smooth and uninterrupted writing flow
- vary sentence structures so your ideas have impact
- thoroughly proofread to eliminate errors
- write over 300 words.

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Achievement with Excellence

- [Develop idea\(s\) convincingly](#) with detail in a piece of formal writing.
- Use a controlled writing style appropriate to audience, purpose, and text type, and which [commands attention](#).
- [Structure material clearly and effectively](#) in a way that is appropriate to audience, purpose, and text type.
- Use [writing conventions accurately](#).

Make sure you:

- reach Achievement with Merit
- use original ideas and/or a unique perspective
- add useful information by using examples, facts, and opinions to highlight your idea(s)
- write confidently using formal language and an objective tone throughout the essay
- write informatively to challenge and/or interest the reader
- combine complex ideas, language, and structure successfully
- structure material in a unique way, possibly by connecting the introduction and conclusion so that your writing is memorable
- use a range of sentence structures for deliberate effect
- thoroughly proof read to eliminate errors
- write over 300 words.

Writing process

The writing process is a series of steps you need to follow in order to complete the task in the examination:

1. Understand the task
2. Brainstorm ideas
3. Organise ideas
4. Write an essay
5. Edit and proofread

These notes will help you with the writing process:

- **Understand the task.** Try underlining keywords in the instructions and the task before you start writing. Formal writing is also known as: discursive, transactional, expository, informative, or report writing. All formal writing requires you to write in a formal way and present ideas supported by an explanation and example. These sites may be useful:
 - [Checklist - Argument](#)
 - [Persuasion and argument](#)
 - [Following an argument](#)
 - [Checklist – Explanation](#)
- **Brainstorm relevant ideas**
This is how you record all of your initial thoughts and ideas to help you select an approach to the topic. It is important to spend time thinking about all the possibilities and to think your ideas through before you begin the writing process. A good topic or idea is one that you have a lot to say about and can add carefully chosen accurate detail.
Sites to visit:
 - [What is brainstorming?](#)
 - [Planning \(Invention\): When you start to write](#)
 - [Developing and collecting ideas](#)
- **Organise ideas into a logical order.** Your initial brainstorming must be reorganised into a logical and interesting progression of thought, to give your essay an overall structure.

Here are some possible structures:

- Look at one side of the issue. Choose either 'for' or 'against', and list your points in priority order with the most important first.
- Look at both sides of the issue. Split your argument in half grouping all your points 'for' and then all your points 'against', then bring them together in the conclusion.

The structure you choose will depend on the topic you are writing about and the effect you want to create.

Look at your introduction and conclusion.

Having an effective introduction will encourage your audience to read your work, help to set the tone and to introduce the main idea and/or opinion. Try to reword the topic in your own language to state your opinion clearly.

A conclusion is more than just repeating the introduction, it should tie any loose ends together and leave a clear message with the reader. A strong conclusion will challenge the reader to think beyond the limits of the topic and may offer solutions, or recommendations.

Sites to visit:

- [Writing to argue, persuade, instruct](#)
- [English: Writing](#)
- **Edit for ideas and structure** (see [organise ideas into a logical order](#)). Check to see if your meaning is clear and your ideas are in the best order for your argument/opinion.
- **Edit for punctuation, spelling, grammar, and word choice.**

Formal tone in a discursive essay

It is important when you write a discursive essay to write in a proper formal way.

You should not use an informal style to write a discursive essay.

In simple terms, this means the following:

DO

- Write in proper, complete sentences
- Use complete words and expressions
- Use proper, standard English

DO NOT USE

- Abbreviations (i.e./ e.g./ etc/ UK/ &)
- Contractions (isn't / don't/ won't)
- Slang (e.g. bloke/geezer etc)
- Colloquial language (mate, bolshy, etc)

On a slightly different note, you should also try to make sure that you use a decent standard of vocabulary in any formal essay you write.

In particular, try to avoid weak vocabulary such as 'get', 'got' and 'getting'. Relying on this level of vocabulary too often suggests that your power of expression is weak. **Build up your word power!**

Now try a **Test Bite**

Word choice

This is an important part of the proofreading process where you must evaluate how effective each word is, or combinations of words are.

Draft sentence:

If you have good quality family time it is like a future investment.

Edited sentence:

To invest in your future is to spend time with your family.

In the edited sentence, the writer has selected and rearranged keywords, making the message more direct.

Draft sentence:

~~I believe that~~ genetically modified food should be labelled so that consumers learn to make an informed choice when purchasing food.

Edited sentence:

Genetically modified food should be labelled so that consumers learn to make an informed choice when purchasing food.

Sentence structure

It is important to vary your sentence structure so your writing is not all the same. Using different types of sentences will help emphasise different words or ideas. Here are four types of sentences:

- **Simple sentences** have a subject, verb, and object.

For example:

Graffiti [subject] spoils [verb] buildings [object].

- **Compound sentences** have two simple sentences of equal importance, with the same subject. The sentences are usually linked by a conjunction ('and', 'so', 'therefore') or a semi colon (;).

For example, the following two simple sentences can be combined to form a compound sentence:

Graffiti [subject] spoils [verb] buildings [object]. Graffiti [subject] causes [verb] many problems [object].

When these sentences are combined they form a compound sentence:

Graffiti spoils buildings and [conjunction] causes many problems.

- **Complex sentences** consist of two simple sentences that are not of equal importance.

For example – two simple sentences:

Graffiti spoils buildings. Graffiti causes many problems.

When these sentences are combined they form a complex sentence.

For example:

Since graffiti spoils buildings it causes many problems.

[**The first** part of the sentence is more important than the second part of the sentence.]

- **Run on sentences** have at least two simple sentences about different subjects that have not been separated with any punctuation.
- **Minor sentences** are short and may not have a subject or a verb, yet they are still make sense. They can be effective when used correctly.

Sites to visit:

- [The Structure of a Sentence](#)
- [How sentences are structured](#)
- [Varying sentences and punctuation](#)

Paragraphing and linking ideas

Paragraphs are made up of a series of sentences based around a topic. Without clear paragraphs it is difficult to understand what the piece of writing is about because there is no grouping of ideas to help organise the writer's thoughts.

A standard paragraph will have these elements:

- topic sentence – stating the main idea
- explanation – expanding the idea through discussion
- evidence and detail – examples, facts, and details to illustrate the idea.

It is important to create links between paragraphs so the writing flows and the reader can be guided on to your next point without becoming confused. When using evidence to support your point you must also link it into the paragraph.

- [Evidence](#)
- [Working out the difference between fact and opinion](#)
- [Paragraphing](#)
- [Transitional Devices](#)

Task 1: Introduction

a. What is an argument?

Start to develop a shared understanding and a definition through discussion and role play activities resource.

b. Is there a 'right' answer? Listening to each other

Discuss a topic that will stimulate an argument for which there is no clear answer. You could use [Resource 1: The Baroness's story](#) and [Resource 2: Survival](#). Divide the class into groups of no more than five using these [strategies for grouping students](#). Each group should have an observer who should use the [Task sheet for observers](#). Put a time limit on the activity. Groups will want to report back their opinions. Allow time for observers to comment.

- c. With teacher guidance discuss the skills of presenting a good argument. Write a self evaluation of your role in the group and how effective you were in presenting a good argument.

d. What makes a person good at arguing

In groups brainstorm what makes a person good at arguing. Discuss the [What to avoid? OHT](#). Talkback radio may provide good examples.

Task 2: Listening and responding to arguments

- a. A key discussion point developed from the radio documentary [Kevin's Sentence](#) is the nature of the sentence given to a young Canadian man who drove while drunk and killed his two friends.

Guided by the [resource sheets](#), listen to selections from the tape, recording what you hear and giving your opinions on the issues raised.

- b. You could also prepare and present a role play interview on the issue. The role play could be videoed and played back for self evaluation.

Task 3: Viewing and responding to arguments

- a. Watch one or more television interviews in which two participants express different view points. TV1 programmes like [Close Up](#) and [Campbell Live](#) may provide suitable interviews.
- b. Use a selected TV interview to identify and discuss:
- what ideas the speakers are talking about
 - how the speakers express then support opinions
 - the role of the interviewer in encouraging and stimulating discussion
 - the balance in the discussion

You could use or adapt the resources in [Viewing Current Affairs](#) for this task, and the [Close Up](#) site has archived interviews.

- c. Your responses and details from various resources in tasks 2 and 3 can be used to answer questions for the externally assessed achievement standard 1.5. Look over the [Sample external assessment for AS90056 \(English 1.5\)](#) resources and develop written responses to selected questions.

Task 4: Role play activity - an interview

- a. Work in groups of five. Each group selects a topical issue from a class brainstorm list. One student is the interviewer; and the other students divide themselves into for and against the issue.
- b. You should identify and establish a role from a given list eg. scientist, elderly resident, police, etc. You are to argue from this role but present an informed viewpoint.

To prepare for this task you could draft statements which include opinions together with supporting evidence. The student who is to act as the interviewer should research and prepare questions.

Resources which may be useful for both the interviewer and interviewees could include [NZ Year Book](#), [current newspapers](#), [Listener](#), [World Wide Web](#), [Encyclopedias](#), [Barb Wired](#)

- c. Each group should present their interview. You could also video the interviews. You should be aware of the need for the collective responsibility of the group to sustain the discussion!

As each group presents their interview, other groups could use the [Task sheet for observers](#) to analyse the interview.

Task 5: Developing a written argument

- a. Select a topic covered in tasks 2, 3 or 4 which interests you. You will write on this topic as a formative piece for AS90053 (English 1.2): *Produce formal writing*.
- b. Look over the [Sample external assessment for AS90053 \(English 1.2\)](#). Follow the instructions in the sample assessment when you write on the topic you have selected. Using the [Drafting and Processing](#) resource as a guide, complete a piece of writing which expresses different sides of your selected issue. You could also publish your writing on [Barb Wired](#).

RESOURCES

Description

This module is divided into four parts

- Part one: Being 'on form'.
- Part two: Style, structure and conventions.
- Part three: Expressing ideas.
- Part four: The writing process

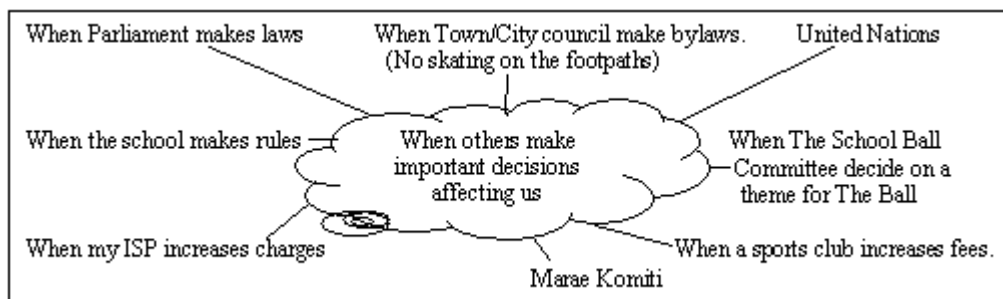
Part 1: Being 'on form'

🧑 Explain:

- Various forms exist to fulfil specific tasks (provide examples e.g. a school report!).
- The correct form must be used for the specific application (example, ask - "Would it be appropriate to express sympathy at the death of a person by sending the family a humorous 'get well soon' card?").
- When the need arises for students to communicate in writing to fulfil a particular task, they will need to know which form to use, and how to use it. (example - when the student wants to have his say or contribute information to a decision-making body.)

With the class.

Brainstorm: "Occasions where important decisions (affecting us) are made by others.'



🧑 Explain:

There are many occasions where decision making bodies will make decisions that affect the student directly. These are usually highly structured bodies with a great many rules and conventions governing how they operate. (Make links with formal meeting procedure).

In our democratic society, we are always given the opportunity to provide input into this process. However - just as the decision making body operates under a number of rules and conventions, **any submission we make must also adhere to certain rules and conventions.** If we are to be heard - we must make sure our input is presented in the appropriate manner. Generally we will have our say in writing, we might call this 'a written submission'.

Key points:

- In a democratic society we all have the opportunity to be heard on matters that affect us.
- The decision making process is a formal operation with many rules and conventions.
- Any submission we make must also follow rules and conventions.
- Unless we can use these processes, our voices will not be heard.

- We use formal writing to make a written submission.

Part 2: Style, Structure and Conventions

Many people feel very strongly about issues such as genetic modification, if these people want to be heard, their submissions must be made within the established form. Such a submission can be called a piece of 'formal writing'. There are 3 main elements to consider when we use formal writing:

- **STYLE** - The way we write, this must be appropriate to: audience, purpose and text type.
- **STRUCTURE** - The order and flow of the writing (Do not confuse structure with layout).
- **CONVENTIONS** - The rules of the particular form, layout is part of this

Style is **the control of language** making it appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context of the writing task. The writer's style is often shown through word choice.

Activity:

Create a table on the blackboard to compare writing styles in the GE context.

Restrained style	Emotive style
Modified foods Resulting organisms Genetic engineering Escape from the laboratory	Frankenstein food Abominable creations Meddling with Creation Contamination of the environment

Question: Which style and word choices are appropriate for formal writing restrained or emotive?

Question: In what other context (form) might the emotive style be more appropriate?

A formal writing style will use **precise language**, words like, 'things' and 'stuff' are not precise. Precision in writing will avoid:

- clichés (worn out expressions that may once have been clever but now sound trite).
- unnecessary jargon (specialized vocabulary that is only understood by a particular group that is not your target audience).
- slang.

Formal writing will have **an even, appropriate tone**.

To understand tone in writing, we need to think about 'tone in speaking'. In speaking we use tone to communicate our attitude and feelings to the listener. Vocal tones can be:

- Serious
- Teasing
- Sarcastic
- Loving
- Professional
- Distant

Tone in writing can communicate the same attitudes and feelings.

Part 3: Expressing Ideas.



Explain: The Otago Regional Council submission guidelines state that:

(Write on blackboard) 'Your submission will be more effective if it is well organised and to the point, supports your views with adequate information and provides a clear, thorough analysis of the issues.'

Analyse the statement looking at the implications of:

- well organised (structure)
- to the point (style)
- support views with adequate information (a convention of the form)
- clear, thorough analysis of the issues (a convention of the form)



Explain:

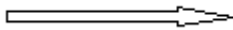
We provide a written submission to a decision making body to explain all or some of:

- what we think
- what we feel
- what we know

To do so we express our ideas. This is sometimes called 'providing an argument'. When we argue a case we need to provide proof or support of our ideas.

On blackboard:

Ideas supported by details

I believe this  Because of this	
I believe it is wrong to build the slaughterhouse next to my home.... because the smell would be unpleasant, it would attract flies, and it might pose a health risk

In supporting your argument, imagine yourself as a lawyer defending a client. The more evidence you can provide in support of your case, the more convinced the jury (in this case, the council) will be. Use examples, statistics, quotations from authoritative sources, or scientific evidence to support your statements.

⚠ Examiners have commented that in the past a significant number of papers were let down by intrusive errors in the writing. This being so, further activities involving step 4 (above) will probably be required. If students are not displaying competence in editing for spelling, grammar and punctuation direct them to the [proof reading](#) resource asking them to use it as a checklist for appraising their own work.